Arab Ba'th Socialist Party

THE REVOLUTION OF THE NEW WAY

Târiq 'Azîz

Unity Freedom Socialism

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Editor's Note

The Arab Socialist Ba'th Party regards all Arabs as being part of one nation both in the cultural and spiritual sense. The different countries in which they live, make up a politically and economically united fatherland. In the Party's documents, 'the Arab fatherland' means all the Arab countries. Each of these is a 'qotr' which, literally translated, means country; in the Ba'th context, it should be read as province or region. The adjective 'Qotri' (provincial, regional) is used when referring to an individual country. The adjective 'qawmi' (national), on the other hand, is used when referring to all the countries which together make up the one fatherland. Thus, the National Directorate deals only with matters concerning the whole fatherland. Each Regional Directorate deals with matters within its own country. As for example, the Lebanese or Jordanian Regional Directorate etc.

The word Ba'th can be translated as meaning

revival, resurgence or renewal. Hitherto, resurgence seems to be the meaning which is preferred by Arab intellectuals and foreign Arab experts.

Introduction

This is a collection of essays written between 1968 and 1973 and published in the Ath-Thawra daily. Two of them were written then, but were not published.

Publishing "old" essays in the form of a collection is indeed embarrassing, for one should carefully adhere to the texts, especially texts which have been published and read. There is, however, the temptation to readjust, to add and to revise owing to the fact that the writer is a changeable human being and the lapse of time and development of events impose their changes on him.

One who may compare the essays of this collection, as they were published, with those published today, will find the double-polarity of these two tendencies. But I can assure the reader that any readjustment, addition, revision or omission made, was not major and has not affected the meaning or intention.

Finally I should thank my two friends, Kamal al-Hadithi and Khalil al-Khouri who have helped me greatly in revising these essays.

Târiq 'Azîz
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The July 17th, 1968, Revolution: A New Kind of Revolution *

In the fourth year since the July 17th 1968 Revolution, it is useful and even necessary, to discuss the progress of the Revolution, not from the point of view of what it has achieved, but rather to make an assessment of its "quality"! The achievements, important as they are, do not have a "qualitative" value unless they are consistent with and relevant to a clear historical objective.

In our Arab nation, as in other countries, some regimes have carried out many gigantic achievements, but these were started with such indefinite aims that some of them were contradicting each other. The regimes were drifting and no one knew what their policies or objectives were. So some of them collapsed and their achievements did not excuse them, and those still in existence are there at the mercy of fate.

One might think, prima facie, that an assessment of the revolution, a revolution of a political party,

* Published in the Ath-Thawra daily on 17 July, 1972.

could be simply a matter of stating former and current objectives, and then drawing up a balance sheet showing those which have been accomplished in comparison with the objectives.

But it is not so simple as it may seem to be, because the general situation in the Arab homeland has become very complicated, with the following results:

One: The name of the party which leads the revolution in Iraq is not the only one called the Arab Ba'th Socialist Party. In another country there is a party which falsely claims the same name.

Two: The political aims of the party are not theirs alone. There are many other political organizations, some in power, some not, using the same motto of Unity, Liberty and Socialism either in the same or a different order.

Three: In addition to the mottoes, even the party's political theories, in terms of its principles and viewpoints, can generally be regarded as being those of many other parties and organizations and of more than one Arab regime.

Therefore, the assessment, starting from the fact that it is a party-led revolution, by the Arab Ba'th Socialist Party, is not a straightforward task, but rather a "compound" process originating from the party objectives of Unity, Liberty and Socialism.

The task is made more difficult, more "compound", by the fact that the revolution was formed at an extremely complex and sensitive time, when standards were confused, belief in action and promises at a low ebb and doubt widespread.

In the 1950s, it was relatively easy to assess the July 23rd 1952, Revolution in Eypt, Algeria's Revolu-

tion and the July 16 th 1958, Revolution in Iraq. But today the difficulties and perplexities have intensified.

As a discussion point, one could assess the revolution from the angle of whether it was "patriotic and democratic", or "socialist", or "unitary, progressive and democratic", etc. Although this aspect is important, because all aspects connected with the Arab revolution should be investigated, it will not be discussed in this essay.

How then is this revolution to be assessed?

The answer is to examine whether the July 17th 1968, Revolution indicates a "new direction" for the Arab homeland or not. Its identity with the Arab Ba'th Socialist Party, whose motto is unity, liberty and socialism, is beyond doubt and the standard for judging whether the revolution points to a "new direction" is the "degree of seriousness of the revolution" in carrying out its aims.

First. We have said that the July 17th 1968 Revolution is that of the Arab Ba'th Socialist Party, but the question to be asked at the beginning is whether indeed it is the Party's revolution.

This may seem to be a strange and rather delicate question, but is very necessary in order to set up the yardsticks for judging the "seriousness" of the revolution.

It is not a secret to anyone in the Arab homeland, after a bitter series of defeats and setbacks, that what is said officially is not always entirely correct; there are regimes in existence where, according to their constitutions, certain parties or organizations are ostensibly in power, whereas, in fact, the Department

of State Security may possess power many times greater. This is a familiar situation for us. Another is the role sometimes played by the military establishment, which, because it was involved in the political changes, is greater than it may appear to be. Inevitably this is at the expense of the party ostensibly in power.

Besides the military, there are also the tribal, religious, family groupings and other outdated relationship which, although attacked in the newspapers and official media, often play an important and vital part in the control of power. Hence, the importance of this first question in assessing the degree of seriousness of the revolution which is to be a revolution of a new kind.

Obviously the fact that it is the party's revolution can be loudly proclaimed and all kinds of evidence and examples put forward to support the claim. But what is more important is that the people must be convinced by what is said. In Iraq, in the Arab homeland and in circles concerned with Arab affairs, the party character of the revolution has not been taken very seriously. At best, it was viewed as a movement by certain Ba'thists rather than a revolution of the Ba'th Party, and was simply the result of applying the measurement used on previous experiments by the party and by other Arab organizations.

However, since the early stages of the revolution, people had begun to notice new phenomena which differed from those they had observed in other Ba'th Party regimes and others carrying a political party label.

Those were the first signs, but they were not

sufficient to eradicate the long-established image.

People had lost their faith in political statements, mottoes and promises and were looking for tangible evidence. The masses, sometimes with good will, sometimes with malice, were seeking the role of the party establishment and the organizations and people involved in running it. I emphasize the words "organizations" and "people", for it is well known that in normal times the eyes of officials, individuals and information media turn towards party headquarters. But that, when real decisions of power are made, they do not turn to the people sitting in its splendid rooms. Instead, they look to those who are the real decision-makers and rulers and do so without cameras and microphones.

Having spent four years in studying those crucial days and examining thousands of practical examples both large and small, i.e. from the July 30th 1968 Revolution to the oil nationalization of June 1st 1972, I believe that the majority of people in Iraq, as well as other Arabs and foreigners, are satisfied that the Party really is the leading organization and is not a facade for other forces.

The question may well arise as to what the connection is between the revolution being that of the Ba'th Party and the claim that it is "a new kind of Revolution".

The correct answer to this important question is that the Ba'th Party revolution has made the first serious and courageous attempt in the Arab revolutionary movement to "put things in their right place". When a movement succeeds in getting its priorities right, it has fulfilled the first condition for being able

to operate effectively. It was this that the Arab revolutionary movement lacked in the past and was one of its most serious weaknesses.

The movement was strong and active during the 1950s and was a rallying point for millions of the Arab masses. With this support and its youthful strength it won great victories. Then it began to falter, to lose its link with the masses and eventually its ability to confront imperialism and zionism and fulfil its promises. The fundamental, but not the only reason for this, was that it was unable to "put things in their right place".

Some regimes, considered to be part of the Arab revolutionary movement, alleged that their power was based on the support of the masses, who would be the deciding factor, whereas in fact they had a guiding "mandate" over the masses. To cover up this contradiction they concocted official organizations and suppressed the genuine popular ones, and thus missed the advantages which are to be found in both dictatorial and democratic regimes. At the same time they lost a great deal of their ability to implement their aims and objectives.

These regimes built up big armies with the faith and confidence of the whole Arab nation. The purpose was the liberation of Palestine, to which only lip service was paid, while the armies were used for everything except fighting and became a large police force.

No revolutionary believes that the army should be divorced from politics, for the army is part of the people and must possess a high degree of political consciousness if it is to carry out its duties to the nation. But to divert the army from its primary duty,

to carry out other functions is another matter. Because of this, the war of 1967 was lost, and the nation nearly went insane. The Arab armies with their hundreds of thousands of brave men, with the most modern weaponary and long standing military traditions were sent into a war in which they were defeated. The fault was not that they were incapable of fighting valiantly, but rather that they were the victims of failure to "put things in their right place".

There are other examples. The failure to put things in their right place is a dissipation of the nation's potentiali and causes chaos and muddle in the government controlled sector. A country in this condition does not need an enemy to defeat it, for it has already been done by its own hand.

When the ostensible leader becomes a facade for others and his party is only a sham with less influence than any other civil or military establishment, when the soldier works as an economist and the economist in the secret service and when the trade union becomes a repressive instrument, then democracy is lost and there is disarray in every sector of society. Words lose their meaning and there is no confidence in any institution.

So, under these circumstances, it is important that the Revolution should be seen as a Ba'th Party revolution and that the Party should not be a facade for other apparent or hidden forces. It is also a means of understanding the degree of commitment by the mass of people and the extent to which they believe that the declared aims and objectives are realistic and attainable.

This may not be a very important factor in other

nations, but for the Arabs it is at the heart of the revolutionary movement.

During the past four years, the July 17th 1968 Revolution has had considerable success in this respect, but this should not lead to complacency and inaction. On the contrary, since it has had the effect of increasing the nation's self-confidence, it should be reinforced to the point that it becomes a permanent feature from which there will be no withdrawal. It will become then a major element for victory in today's battles and those to come.

Second: A comprehensive look at the progressive regimes and parties, whether in government or not, in the Arab homeland today, reveals two contradictory situations:

1. The great capacities of the Arab nation arouse enthusiasm and optimism, especially when considering the progress which they could realise, as well as the strength of the resistance in the face of imperialist-zionist aggression.

2. A scepticism and even a feeling of hopelessness for the future resulting from the conflicts and rivalries which exist both within and between these regimes and parties. This has led to their being unable to carry out this minimum commitment to safeguard their strong positions or to match the ever-increasing strength of the enemy.

This state of affairs had continued for so long a period of time, that it was becoming almost an endemic disease within the Arab revolution for which no treatment seemed to be effective.

The situation reached the point—after the defeat of June 5th 1967—that it was felt to be a patriotic duty to revolt against this state of affairs in order to create new conditions. These conditions would consist of the normal relationships based upon Pan-Arab and self interest, reason and logic, between the different regimes and parties who were, in any case, supposed to be progressive and opposed to the colonialists, Zionists and their allies.

The Arab nation now no longer is interested, as it once was, in revolutions and changes of regime, knowing from bitter past experience, that the honeymoon would be short-lived and that it would soon subside into the condition of mad conflict and chaos which had become familiar over the past fifteen years. This was the reaction to the July 17th 1968 Revolution and people thought that the slogans and ideas were nothing new. All the actors on the stage were calling for unity and great sacrifices, but in fact did not behave in a way which matched these exhortations.

The reception in the Arab homeland to the new Iraqi revolution was dictated by the accumulation over the years of the good or bad relationships which they had had with the Arab Ba'th Socialist Party. For decades the Party has been an important part of the Arab national movement and an important element in the conflicts and wrangles which arose in the ranks of the movement. Worse still, these regimes, which could be compared with a mad house, reacted violently to each new situation in the homeland. Denigration and panegyrics followed each other in lunatic succession. Under these conditions, it was difficult for a new established regime to act as it would like from

the beginning with its hands free to carry out its objectives.

After looking at the series of setbacks from Syrio-Egyptian unity in 1958 to the June defeat in 1967, the Party realized that the only way in which a genuine patriotic movement could salvage the Arab nation from her plight and turn defeat into a springboard for victory, was to stop the internal quarrels and conflicts at all levels and adopt a united front. The papers of the Ninth National Congress of the Arab Ba'th Socialist Party stated this clearly and precisely a few months before the July 17th 1968 Revolution.

The party in Iraq was to give priority, in addition to its patriotic slogans, to convincing the mass of the people of its good will and secondly, that it was capable of effective, tangible action.

For after their long and disappointing experiences, the masses will have no confidence in any regime or party which is at war with other progressive forces, and similarly no confidence that a national coalition could be formed to carry out a long-term programme.

Therefore, the party's task in this area, after it came to power for the second time in Iraq on July 17th 1968 was difficult, indeed very difficult.

In spite of the new theoretical convictions, it had to struggle with itself to offset the quarrels and bitterness of its past experience with others, to offset the effect of the calamity of June 5th 1967, and its own previously unsuccessful experiment, and at the same time face up to the problems of the task in had taken on, and open up new horizons.

In extremely complex circumstances it had searched carefully and found a common language for a

realistic dialogue with others—a dialogue which had been broken off for a long time during which the progressive movements had learned only the language of rivalry and strife. While trying to find these formulae for cooperations, it had to cope with its responsibilities for government and to defend itself against a number of attempted attakcs and denigration.

A further complication was that the Revolution took place at a time when the arab revolutionary movement found itself faced with a number of difficult choices on important matters, paricularly that of Palestine. Any choice made at Arab national level would immediately mean disagreement in Iraq with other progressive forces considered to be allies.

Because the Revolution was led by a Party whose views on the national cause were well-known, the Party naturally had to define clearly its policies with confident enthusiasm. During the initial stages, therefore, it could not avoid being caught up in the whirlwind of controversy.

However, taking the four years as a whole, and setting apart the inevitable shortcomings and mistakes of the initial stages, the July 17th 1968 Revolution has succeeded in creating a new and special element in Arab life which gives confidence and hope.

In a relatively short time, this revolution has been successful in arresting the haemorrhage in the life of Iraq and has, step by step, been able to find ground for common action with other progressive and national forces. On the level of the Arab nation it is still trying to forge a united front. It is encouraging neighbourly relations on one hand and aggressive attitudes towards imperialism on the other. Internationally

it has worked out alliances and treaties of friendship and cooperation with some world powers, which will have a great significance for the Arab cause. This is a practical demonstration that this revolution is of a "new kind".

But this does not indicate a state of satisfaction with what has been achieved so far. There is a great deal still to be done at regional and Pan-Arab levels. One of these is the building of a combatant Arab Front which will continuously engage in struggle the mainstays of imperialism and zionism. There is an old maxim which says: "Where there is a will, there is a way."

Third: In the Arab homeland in the past, the reactionary ruling class had spread a dangerous infection in Arab politics, namely making exaggerated promises on hopes for the future and their personal abilities to carry them through. But every time the Arab man in the street found enormous disparity between promise and achievement, between words and deeds. He was shocked, and as a result of all the lies, developed a cynicism and even disdain for his rulers. It was one of the reasons for the revolts against them.

The most painful and electrifying shock which sparked the spirit of rebellion was the loss of Palestine following the flow of optimistic promises. It was a reason behind many other important changes in the Arab homeland.

As these changes began to occur in different countries and new governments came to power, the people sought a relationship based on mutual confidence with their rulers. But even before the new rulers had been able to implement a significant proportion of their promises, the people gave them their

support to a degree which was not expected by these rulers. This was a special situation, since the Arab nation had become wary of the liars and the demagogues.

It was this support which enabled many of the progressive achievements which had been considered unattainable, to be realized. Another result was that it became possible at an early stage, to challenge the reactionary regimes and the imperial and colonial bastions. The nation's self-confidence increased as well as its determination to make sacrifices for the Pan-Arab aims. This culminated in two historic victories, the Syrio-Egyptian Unification and the July 16th 1958 Revolution in Iraq. The picture then began to change. The sickness within the new regimes, which hitherto had been unnoticed in the overwhelming enthusiasm for the struggle against reaction and colonialism began gradually to appear. From small specks they developed into wide stains, and once again the seeds of doubt and mistrust were sown between the people and their rulers, this time the "progressive" ones.

The people felt that their confidence was being abused and that they were being deluded by false promises or promises only partially fulfilled. Their rulers claimed that their achievements were the best that the nation could hope for, and threatened anyone who raised his voice in criticism or in demand for explanation. The people were ridiculed and rebuffed in their attempts to participate in their future and the fulfilment of their hopes, even although this could have been of help to the leaders to whom they had given wholehearted support.

Only a few years after the great successes, further

progress slowed down and some collapsed, such as the Syrio-Egyptian Unification. Instead of investigating the reasons for failure and presenting the nation with the facts and the proposed corrective action, the deception continued in the form of new promises and new slogans.

But in spite of their anger at this and several attempts to revolt, the people were still ready to give their unlimited support to a realistic and honest plan.

Then came the deep wound of the June defeat, penetrating the mind, body and soul of the nation, not because she lost a war, for many a nation loses wars, but because she was the victim of a big trick. Having been promised a quick and easy victory, and yet only being in the position of giving applause, she found herself very quickly in a state of defeat.

The people's reaction was unexpected both by the enemy and by their rulers.

Instead of falling into despair, they behaved with a high degree of responsibility, closed their ranks behind their leaders who had expected a defatist situation to give them confidence, hoping that the battle would continue.

During the last five years, that is from the defeat up until today, they have been patiently waiting for an opportunity for victory to occur. But the same situation has begun to reoccur with the great disparity between aim and implementation, between promise and execution.

This is an extremely serious problem in the Arab homeland, especially for the progressive regimes as it has been going on since before the defeat. It was in this delicate situation that the July 17th 1968 Revolu-

tion was born in Iraq. In essence, the revolution was a response to the defeat and an attempt to convert it into a springboard for victory, as was reported in the papers and Party statements. But the people were going through a crisis of confidence, combined however with a certain amount of optimism because of the heroic deeds of the Palestinian Resistance and some aspects of cooperation between Arab regimes. They were determined to measure the new government against the yardstick of their dearest cause—that of Palestine and the occupied territories—and against its success in matching deeds to words.

This, then, was the major critical risk facing the revolution.

On one hand, it is a new revolution in a country which for many years, has been torn by strife and with very complicated political, economic and social problems. It was unrealistic to expect it to go to war with the resources existing in Iraq and before it had resolved its internal problems, and so giving more room for manoeuvre.

On the other hand, the psychological climate existing in the Arab homeland did not allow any revolution, especially a Ba'th Party revolution in Iraq, any period of time to prepare itself for war. There is nothing in Arab political life which might be called step by step politics.

However the Arab reality did not permit the revolution to be modest in its promises and slogans. The Party's aims, in any event, constituted a big promise and any modesty at the outset might have led to ambiguity and misunderstanding, for the Arab masses, in spite of their dislike of exaggerated slogans,

were not yet accustomed to anything else. So, in spite of its knowledge of earlier mistakes, the Revolution was obliged to proclaim ambitious slogans and promises.

In order to keep faith with these, it then had to exert an almost impossible effort.

This was not easy, and the portents of a crisis of confidence between the revolution and the masses began to appear.

Those were critical times, and the Revolution strenuously persevered in implementing its promises and gaining the confidence of the masses. In spite of its mistakes, the Revolution has been able over four years, to prove by practical examples, that it is capable of carrying out its promises, is worthy of the people's confidence, and is indeed a new departure from the past.

From its early days, the revolution has had to deal with intrigue aimed at its heart.* Plots and intrigues are familiar phenomena in Third World revolutions in general and Arab revolutions in particular. Usually they are not met with determination, and even if they are, they may continue for a long time and finally result in heavy losses.

The July 17th Revolution dealt with this problem in only 13 days. This was its first serious challenge, but after a few weeks it had to face another difficult test in the form of the increasingly dangerous activi-

* This refers to the attempted plot by Abdul Razzaq al-Naif's clique against the July 17th 1968 Revolution. The clique was liquidated on July 30th, 1968. The Political Report of the Eighth Regional Congress of the Arab Ba'th Socialist Party, dated January 1974, describes this plot.

ties of espionage networks and their supporters. At the time, this was misinterpreted and traces of it still exist today; many people misunderstood it and drew the wrong conclusions.

The liquidation of the espionage networks and other traitors was inevitable if the country was to be swept clean of the dangerous mines which had been planted everywhere. It was not logical to allow enemy agents to move about freely while the country was still in a state of emergency and had just suffered a serious defeat,—a defeat partially due to the fact that this situation was allowed to exist.

The second aspect, that of the methods employed, was closely associated with the question of confidence between the people and their rulers. To be frank, the people, after their experience since the 140s and up to the revolution, doubted the intention and capability of any regime to eradicate the espionage networks. They believed that any campaign of this kind would be a fiction which would end in a kind of compromise. They even suspected that the tentacles of these networks extended into the highest levels of any Iraqi government. So the revolution set out to eradicate the networks ruthlessly and it was decided to excecute the condemned men in public. One should not think that the hundreds of thousands of people who enjoyed going out to look at the hanged bodies, are barbaric or primitive. This would be an injustice and also a false impression. That event was a "monument of confidence" staged by the revolution in the most important square in Bagdad to prove to the people that what had been impossible in the past was now a fact that could speak for itself.

During these four years, the revolution took the same care and vigilance over the safety of its internal organisation as it did against external threats. Experience has shown that this was both a courageous and wise course of action.

It did not embark on a policy of vengeance or intimidation, for it knew that the people were not in favour of these methods for the resolution of internal problems. In the fulfilment of the promises which it had made, there were some which were felt to be beyond its reach. The Arab Ba'th Socialist Party report, issued at the Seventh Regional Congress at the beginning of 1969, promised that the revolution would recognize Social Democratic Germany. Most people regarded this as a friendly gesture towards a socialist country, but that in practice, it would never happen.

But in April of the same year, the revolution fulfilled its promise. Iraq was, indeed, the first State outside the socialist bloc to recognize Democratic Germany, and thus the doctrine of Holstein was confounded. After Iraq's recognition, similar action started from the Arab homeland and the Third World.

In the party's proclamations was the promise that the revolution would oppose the attempts of the monopolies to get control of the country's sulphur resources. This was a reference to the U.S. monopolies who had been trying to get control since the 1950s. The people welcomed these promises but doubted thier fulfilment; at best it was thought that, as previously, the exploitation would be postponed once again. But the revolution took what was then considered to be a very courageous act: it made an

agreement with Poland for the exploitation of sulphur.*

The exploitation of oil resources had remained in abeyance since the promulgation of Law No 80 of 1961, and all regimes in Iraq had been afraid to make a deal with the socialist countries, especially the Soviet Union, because of the sensitiveness of this topic in an area which vitally affected the interests of the imperialists. The revolution nevertheless fulfilled its promise of a direct national exploitation of oil.

Before a year had passed the revolution made an agreement with the Soviet Union to exploit the oilfield of North Rumaila, an agreement which was signed on April 7th, 1972 on the occasion of the Silver Jubilee of the Party and the visit of Mr. Alexis Kossygin to Iraq.

As a fruitful comparison, one could say that, in terms of historical significance, the agreement with the Soviet Union was equal to, if not more important than Egypt's decision in 1955 to break away from the armament monopoly and purchase weapons from the socialist countries.

The revolution also promised to find a democratic and peaceful solution to the Kurdish question, and from the beginning, started to make progress. This promise won wide backing, but because the problem had become more and more difficult and complicated over the years, it was regarded as wishful thinking. But with diligence and perseverance a way to a solution was found, and the revolution was able to crown

* The agreement with Poland for the national exploitation of sulphur was concluded in April 1969.

these efforts by the March 11th Declaration in 1970.

In spite of all the difficulties, a peaceful and democratic solution is a tangible fact which is capable of resisting any attempts to destroy it. It is now part of the Arab and Kurdish people, as well as of the patriotic movements which protect and safeguard it.

The revolution also promised the creation of a national front, and this also was considered to be wishful thinking.

Certainly there were moments when there was considerable doubt about the fulfilment of this promise, and the old memories of inter-party relationships came to the fore. But today this has become a tangible fact and there is a realistically-based hope that the revolution has and will introduce new initiatives in the realm of progressive party unity.

Over a three year period, the revolution set the objective developing "strategic alliances" with progressive political forces and concluded the following: recognition of Socialist Democratic Germany, the Provisional and Revolutionary Government of Viet-Nam and the Coalition Government of Cambodia, etc. This was considered to be good, but not sufficient, from the qualitative point of view, to raise the level of international relations. The revolution promised that it would conclude an alliance with the Soviet Union, and many people believed that this was just talk. But in the fourth year of the revolution, on April 9th, 1972 the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation with the Soviet Union was signed. On the internal front, the most ambitious promise concerned the question of the oil industry, which, in Iraq and the Arab homeland, had for many years been part of

the political platforms of all the progressive parties. But it was always considered to be no more than a wishful slogan. On November 15th, 1971, President Ahmed Hassan al-Bakr proclaimed the National Action Charter to the nation. In the section dealing with the National Economy, he said: "Naturally, our strategic aim is to free our oil resources completely from foreign domination and exploitation and to bring it within our national sovereignty; to put it in the service of the people's welfare, and use it as a weapon in the struggle against imperialism and Zionism".

This sentence and the text of the Charter made a good impact but few people took it seriously. At best, it was regarded as an affirmation of the national movements' basic principles.

On December 31st, 1971, Saddâm Husseïn, Vice-Chairman of the Revolutionary Command Council, was addressing an open seminar in the "al-Kashâfa" square. In answer to a question about the attitude towards the oil companies, he said: "Whenever we can live for one or two years on half our salaries, we can bring down the oil companies".

Many said: "It is a good speech, but...".

On May 17th 1972, the situation between the revolution and the oil companies reached a crisis point and the Revolution Command Council issued its famous ultimatum. This made a magnificent impact on the nation, who showed their readiness to fight the battle and make whatever sacrifices might be necessary.

But as the crucial day approached and the leadership were confident of victory, the general atmosphere in the country was a mixture of enthusiasm and worry. I recall that many people who went through the

experience of those days, had faith in nationalization, but were afraid even to mention the word. It was such an important thing which up until now had been part of a dream. It was not only the power of the oil companies which made it so, but also the ineffectivness of Arab political life—the great disparity between words and deeds and the ability to carry them out.

At 10 p.m. on June 1st, 1972, President Ahmed Hassan, proclaimed, in a voice charged with all the emotion of Arab history, the nationalization of the Iraq Petroleum Company.

This proclamation was the great fulfilment of a great promise and the nation rejoiced on that day when she reaped victory after years of defeat and frustration.

Thus with these deeds, the July 17th Revolution was able to set a new example of how to match words with deeds, and is worthy to be considered as "a new kind of revolution". To continue to be so, it has much to do and prove in order to raise confidence in the hearts of those in every part of the wide Arab homeland.

This is a simple attempt to assess the Revolution from those important points of view which represent realistically the Arab condition.

July 17th, 1972.

In the two years which followed the writing of this essay, the July 17th Revolution gave further proof that it was a new model for revolutionary experiment which the Arab homeland had not seen so far.

The promise to create the Progressive Patriotic and Nation Front, referred to previously, became a fact on the fifth anniversary of the Revolution (July 17th, 1973) following an agreement between the Arab Ba'th Socialist Party and the Iraqi Communist Party on the National Action Charter and the functioning of the National Front.

This differs from other similar experiments (the National Union Front in Iraq in 1957, the Algerian National Liberation Front, the National Union and then the Socialist Arab Union in Egypt, and the current Patriotic Front in Syria).

It is an experiment carried out five years after the birth of the revolution and after it had fulfilled its main priorities under the leadership of the Arab Ba'th Socialist Party.

The experiment is based on a long term view of the coalition under which the revolution ensures freedom to form political parties and the freedom of their political and ideological activities. The parties who are members of the Front also have their own newspapers.

During its first year, it has developed smoothly and continuously while making steady progress into new areas of activity.

There is also a wider Pan-Arab aspect to this experiment. The Arab Ba'th Socialist Party considers it as being an example which is required, in the words of Saddâm Husseïn* "to make a contribution towards

* Address of Comrade Saddâm Husseîn at the opening of the International Scientific Seminar on the Alliance between the Movement of National Liberation and the International Socialist System convened in Baghdad on June 5th, 1974.

correcting the relationships between different sides of the patriotic movement throughout the Arab homeland. We, in Iraq, consider that if the experiment is successful here and if it is successful in other Arab countries, then there will be a radical change for the better in the struggle against imperialism, Zionism and reaction."

Progress continued on the question of the peaceful resolution of the Kurdish question. During the two years which have elapsed, the reactionary forces in the Kurdish movement led by Mustafa Barzani came to realize that the revolution was an established government and was determined to implement its promise of Kurdish autonomy. This movement, because of its class nature and alliance with imperialism was opposed to socialism and democracy. They had also preached Kurdish autonomy as a prelude to a secessionist plan and tried by various means to put a spoke in the wheel of the autonomy implementation.

But the revolution promulgated the autonomy law as planned on March 11th, 1974, and followed it up by a programme for isolating the reactionary forces by cooperation with the progressive forces within the Kurdish movement.

In the Arab arena the July revolution strongly supported the Arab revolutionary movement, the more so, since the more flexible and unprincipled counter-attack by the imperialists had weakened the resistance of the "moderate" regimes.

In the October 1973 war, the revolution applied the principles it had proclaimed, and made a vital contribution. In the field, in spite of certain regimes trying to keep the military action to themselves alone,

Iraqi strike units attacked on the morthern front in large numbers and tilted the balance of strength.

In the political field, the nationalization of the American and subsequently the Dutch oil interests* created a new situation in which the reactionary and partially-committed regimes tried by oblique means to abort it and regain control of events.

Thus we find that two more years have confirmed the claim that this revolution, led in Iraq by the Arab Ba'th Socialist Party since July 17th 1968 is truly "a new kind of Revolution".

T. 'Azîz
July 1976

* The American Share in the Bassah Petroleum Company was nationalized on October 7th, 1973 and that of the Dutch on October 21st, 1973.

The Party of Responsibility *

If one should want to describe the qualities which characterize the Arab Ba'th Socialist Party, there are many which can be cited. But amongst them there is one which stands out from all the rest and is of special importance in the Arab homeland and the history of the party: it is the quality of "responsibility".

The party, whose 25th anniversary we celebrate today, (though it is actually older than that), was charged by its beliefs with a historical responsibility: "The Resurrection of the Arab Nation".

This responsibility was always with it as it grew and evolved and no other Arab movement can equal it in this respect. Frequently this feeling of responsibility was the cause of trouble with others but it was also the mainstay of its genius, endurance and continuity.

From the beginning, the party proclaimed a

* Published in the Ath-Thawra daily on 7 April, 1972.

glorious Arab future. Its sayings and teachings were as pure as spring water and as clear as the dawn, and its followers could escape from complex and sordid reality by living in this world of purity. But the basic exhortation of the message was that its followers should try to change reality into the kind of society which the doctrine preaches.

From this point the march of a quarter of century began, which has been filled with rich experience and fraught with many different problems, but which has succeeded in finding the correct path.

Some felt, at the beginning, that the Ba'th Party should be content to criticise only and allow events to proceed until one day a miracle should happen to fulfil the dreams. But the party had this feeling of responsibility towards the future of the nation and realized that it should initiate this miracle. There was a mighty force pushing it towards this, a force similar to that which sustains it and keeps it on the true path.

The party started the work with enthusiasm, but as soon as it found that it was going wrong or was imperfect, it would decide to stop and start again. This is what it did with the first military coup in Syria, the parliamentary struggle experiment, the participation in the Syrian Government before the UAR, the experiment of a coalition with other parties, the collaboration with Nasserism which culminated in UAR, and the experiment of an armed revolution, and taking complete, or almost complete, power.

Some people, seeing only the surface of events, thought that the party was fumbling and had no clear-cut policy of platform. They concocted lies about it and, either with good or evil interest, began to

defame it, which was a setback to the entire contemporary Arab revolution.

The party was not fumbling and indeed had a clear-cut policy, but its feelings of responsibility urged it to try to improve upon existing situations in order to bring them nearer to the Arab revolutions, goals of Unity, Liberty and Socialism which are dialecticly linked together. The party also had a programme for spreadings its doctrine into those ranks of society which could put their energies behind the revolution and play a role in the changes to come.

This did not always succeed. Arab conditions are affected by colonialism and Zionism, by the dominations of a feudal and bourgeois classes, and a heavy heritage of backwardness. The existence of Arab disunity sometimes faced the party with bigger challenges than it could handle, causing its youthful attempts to fail and thence the need to start anew.

At that painful time, there were other complicated problems caused by the party's criticism of some of its well-wishers and supporters, giving them the wrong impression that the party was playing some other game of its own.

A campaign of reform which many people approve, is rejected by the party in favour of a radical revolution, and in a wider area than the region, which will give scope for its ideas on unity. Similarly, socialism alone does not content the party as it does many people. It wants socialism to be coupled with unity in order to drive forward the democratic struggle. The kernel of this struggle is the Palestinian question even though others may classify it as of lesser importance.

This attitude caused antagonism and opposition from other parties who felt that it was extremist and unrealistic, whereas in fact it was trying hard, patiently and realistically to transform society along revolutionary lines. On several occasions, this was a heavy burden and cause of sufferings.

It might be thought that because in one country things were in excellent condition, the party had few troubles and problems. But its responsibility is not just in that country alone, it is in the length and breadth of the Arab homeland.

It is intimately concerned with all the problems and misfortunes of homeland, as well as the dangers which threaten it. It gives to these problems the same attention as it gives to those of its own parish. In so doing, it becomes more exhausted and fully stretched than anyone realises or understands.

This Party responsability for each of the national causes and the many tests it has undergone during a quarter of a century, have given the Ba'th Party an enormous and comprehensive experience. Far from putting it into a privileged position, it attracts to it even more responsabilities. If it had been a party of limited horizons and narrow interests, it would have been happy to sit back to enjoy and take the advantage from its situation. But the Ba'th is not one of these. Rather, in spite of its wealth of experience and excellent reputation, it still continues to try to do more, giving the impression that it has failed in its duty (which of course is not the case). Yet because the hopes and promises it has made to the people are highly ambitious, it feels that it is only at the beginning of the road, and has only carried out a small

part of what it set out to do. This is why the Ba'th Party is the one party, amongst all those existing in the Arab homeland, with the greatest responsabilities and towards which, at the same time, the people are at their most demanding. Arab opinion is not especially interested in what the other parties can do, but as far as the Ba'th Party is concerned, it is constantly being asked to do more—to the point that it sometimes feels that it is the unhappy victim of an injustice.

At the time of the defeat, all eyes turned towards the Party, asking angrily for the reasons why. This was not because the people thought that it was responsible for the defeat, but rather that it was considered to be the Party which could have prevented such things from happening, even though the events were completely out of its control.

What a long, arduous and rich journey has been made by the Arab Ba'th Socialist Party over these twenty-five years and more!

Notwithstanding the fatigue and the pain, this journey is a great source of riches both for it and for the nation.

The people, having proved that the party is prepared to shoulder great responsibility, will give it more in the future as they are convinced of its wide experience. Even today in the bitterness of defeat, they will entrust it with the task of gaining the victory.

The main reason for this is that it leads in Iraq a triumphant revolutionary experiment which they hope will be a prototype and source of revolutionary inspiration as well as a solid base on which to build their goals of Unity, Liberty and Socialism.

The Responsibility We Face *

Last year we observed the 25th anniversary of the foundation of the party. This commemoration had two important dimensions: the first is that of continuity, the second that of regeneration.

The dimension of continuity has great importance for two reasons, the first of which is general and concerns the Arab Ba'th Socialist Party itself. The Arab homeland has seen numerous political movements but very few of them have lasted long enough to celebrate their silver jubilee. So this in itself has a special value in Arab political life. On a more limited scale it is important that many influential circles imagined, and in some cases were convinced, that the Arab Ba'th Socialist Party was finished and had left the stage. The 25th anniversary was the evidence that these convictions were mistaken. In spite of checks and setbacks, oppression and persecution, the party did not quit the scene, and on its 25th anniversary its presence is strong and active.

* Published in the Ath-Thawra daily on 7 April, 1973.

The second dimension, regeneration, has a greater intrinsic value than the first. Continuity is nothing special so long as the party exists, but when associated with regeneration it becomes something really big.

Regeneration does not mean changing old garments for new ones. Rather it is the interaction with life, with the Arab people and their revolutionary movement as well as the world movement. It is using the experience of particular or general experiments in order to find new intellectual and practical perspectives which will help to attain the aims defined by the party at the outset—the aims of Unity, Liberty and Socialism.

We should recall first that the party has condemned the use of exaggerated boastfulness, especially since the June defeat; we cannot therefore say that the Arab Ba'th Socialist Party has reached the stage of complete regeneration, or reached the level required by today's historical needs. But what is certain is that the party has travelled a long way on this road—the road defined by the July 17th Revolution in Iraq in which popular participation was greater than in any other Arab country, including the confrontation with the Zionist enemy.

Closely associated with the dimension of regeneration, are two outstanding events which were coupled with the commemoration last year. I refer here to the national exploitation of oil and the conclusion of the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation with the Soviet Union. With oil exploitation, the party was able for the first time to raise the level of the struggle and to strike a blow at the heart of the oil monopoly. A blow of this kind against enemy number one of

the Arab revolution, imperialism and Zionism, demonstrates that revolutionary planning and resoluteness can begin to attack their foundations.

In the battle, this means a direct engagement in the frontline trenches and not in the rear with imperialism and Zionism.

This qualitative regeneration has had an important effect on the Arab movement which had lacked this firm and scientific discipline in its clashes and therefore did not have the strength to gain its ends.

The Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation with the Soviet Union concluded during the Silver Jubilee of the party on April 9th, 1972, is also closely associated with the dimension of regeneration. The Treaty raised the Arab struggle to a new level and put it on a par with the movements of world revolution.

Bitter experience has shown that the Arab revolution badly needs to build a real and firm alliance with the world revolution. It also needs to abandon the posture that the Arab revolution can have an independent and special position which will enable it to play off the imperialist camp against the socialist camp. Rightist motives in the past took an opportunist line of making deals with both camps and even today this opens breaches in the Arab front and weakens the ability to accomplish the tasks of liberation from Zionist usurpation and the building of unity and socialism.

Thus we find that the party's commemoration of the quarter century of its foundation was coupled with two important shifts in the Arab struggle, the national exploitation of oil and the treaty with the

Soviet Union. What a magnificent historical coincidence!

During the following year these new positions were consolidated. One of them, the battle with the monopolies, moved into a crucial stage, while the second—the treaty—developed to the extent that it virtually became an example which can be followed by Arab and Third World revolutionary movements.

Less than two months after the first successful stage in the exploitation of oil, the July 17th Revolution, under the leadership of the Arab Ba'th Socialist Party nationalized the Iraq Petroleum Company and entered into a new phase in its history. For the first time there had been a direct confrontation with the monopolies, the basis of colonial influence and zionist control of our homeland.

During that year, the proposal for an alliance with the Soviet Union created a furore in the entire area and there were many reactionary and colonialist inspired counsels against it. But the Party went ahead and refused to be deterred by this situation. Comrade Ahmed Hassan al-Bakr, Regional Secretary of the Arab Ba'th Socialist Party visited the Soviet Union in September 1972, and subsequently there was a visit by Comrade Saddâm Husseïn, Deputy Regional Secretary. Both strengthened and developed the alliance and ensured that, for the Arab revolution, it would have a firm and unshakeable base.

Following the battle with the monopolies and the nationalization of the Iraq Petroleum Company, the Party and the Revolution were able to prepare a comprehensive and practical programme for the "Use of Oil as a Weapon in the Battle". The programme was

submitted by the Government of Iraq to the Arab Joint Defence Council in January 1973. The objective of the plan was to break the stalemate in the battle with imperialism, and expose the collusion of Arab reactionary regimes with it. By rousing the people against them it would make possible an objective assessment of the forces on both sides and provide the Arab revolution with an additional weapon.

In order to succeed, this ambitious plan involved the collaboration of other Arab countries, specified as Egypt, Syria and the Palestinian Resistance as a minimum.

Regardless of the painful fact that the Arab League shelved the plan, one of our primary tasks should be to try and make of it a rallying point for all progressive and patriotic Arab forces in the area, be they in government or outside it.

The use of oil as a weapon has become today an imperative. In addition, it is one of the ways in which a united Arab front can be constructed and a link of unification forged between them.

Big responsibilities are before us in the twenty seventh year of the party, and the challenge to the Arab nation is serious and full of complications. World imperialism and Zionism are using all their skill and their astuteness to subjugate the Arab nation to their interests.

Within the Arab homeland, the reactionary factions are collaborating with the enemy to penetrate the strongholds of the liberation movement, and prepare the stage for the imperialist-zionist enemy.

In more than one Arab country signs of bewilderment and deviation are appearing, which can only

lead to errors in the confrontation with the imperialist-zionist enemy and bring negative results.

Our party is the only one which continues to draw attention to these dangers and although it has its main responsibility in leading the revolution in Iraq, it will continue to try to overcome this situation and place the Arab movement on the road to victory.

This is not a form of boasting and in fact it is the most difficult challenge faced by the party since its foundation. Our resources therefore must be equal to, or greater than the challenge, in order to be able to give a positive turn to events.

First of all this requires a very high revolutionary determination, a broad view of the situation, and a faith in the concept of a united front which the Ninth National Congress of the Arab Ba'th Socialist Party had defined as the correct line to follow after the June defeat of 1967.

The work will go ahead of building a model system in this country not only for its own self-sufficiency but also as a base for the Arab struggle. It will also be a beacon to inspire the Arabs and guide them to the right path as well as being the tool for uncovering the conspiracies of the forces of reaction.

The continuity of more than quarter of a century and our pride in this is no longer sufficient at this difficult point in history. The Ba'thist fighters have a heavy burden of responsibility to carry, which with faith, courage and optimism they will do, just as more than twenty-five years ago they hoisted the Ba'th banner and preached the aims of Unity, Liberty and Socialism.

Short reflexions on: The June of Defeat and The June of Victory *

Today, five years after the June defeat of 1967, we can say new things compared to those to which we have been accustomed.

June is no longer a name associated only with bitterness and defeat. It has also become associated with one of the important victories won by the nation. There is in this a unique historical antagonism. Possibly there is something in it which points to the deep relationship between defeat and victory in the life of nations.

The subject of the June of defeat and the June of victory will in the future be a rich topic for intellectuals, writers and journalists. Indeed it already has an irresistable attraction.

In these reflexions I shall try, to the extent allowed in writing in the daily press, to talk about some of the aspects of the relationship between the two experiences: the experience of defeat in 1967, and the experience of victory in 1972.

* Published in the Ath-Thawra Daily on June 1, 1972.

Before June 5th 1967 we heard a lot about the political and military preparations for the liberation of Palestine, but the bitter truth, revealed after the defeat, was that all this was going in other directions, with or without the knowledge of its authors, it was claimed that there was an objective but there was none for the battle which took place, one of the biggest defeats in our entire history.

As for June 1972, it was completely different. We had an objective in which we believed and from the beginning strove to put all our efforts into trying to reach it.

In my belief, this is the basic difference between the two battles and the conclusive factor in the failure of the first and the success of the second.

The other factors are of secondary importance, but nevertheless worth investigating.

Before June 5th, 1967, although we seemed to be taking the question of liberation seriously, our words and behaviour suggested that preparations had been under way for a long time, and we had illusion that we had the strength and capability to defeat our "unaware and cowardly" enemy.

That was a big illusion. On the opposite side was an enemy perfectly prepared for a battle which had been the subject of a continuous obsession. What was worse was that our conduct alarmed him and led him to step up his preparations and mobilise all his own and his foreign supporters' energies.

When the moment of confrontation came, it was normal that he who was prepared should win the victory and he who was unprepared and an impostor should be defeated.

In the battle of June 1st, 1972, it was different. The objective of gaining control over our mineral wealth had not varied over the four years since the birth of the Revolution in July 1968.

The exercises for a conclusive encounter with the monopolies were carried out in the action taken in respect of sulphur extraction, production and marketing, of oil extraction, production and marketing from the North Rumaila Field, the arduous work through the OPEC and through the OAPEC (the oil producing Arab states), and the start of the Teheran negociations and those with Mediterranean Countries. When discussions with the oil monopolies started in mid-January 1972, we had well rehearsed the art of dominating the monopolies.

On June 5th, 1967, we went to war before we had secured our internal, Arab and international fronts. Our internal front was disorganized while the Arab front was fragile and in conflict. Internationally our relations were undefined and we were even uncertain as to who were our allies or our enemies or on whom we could rely.

It was natural that we should be defeated by an enemy which had no internal problems, knew its allies and enemies and never wavered.

It was different on June 1st, 1972. Internally, the cliques which had infiltrated the revolution were liquidated on July 30th 1968 and the reactionary conspiracy was dealt with early in 1970. On March 11th, 1970, a start was made to resolve the Kurdish question peacefully and democratically. Patient work continued to construct the patriotic front.

The National Action Charter was proclaimed on

November 15th, 1971 and great progress was made, the latest stage of which was when the Communists and the Nationalists joined in the government. At Arab level the revolution continued seeking for the consolidation of action with Arab popular movements and governments. The call for unity with Syria and Egypt had a positive effect on Arab relations, in opening up new perspectives.

On the international level, the revolution has chosen its allies and friends and indentified its enemies, from the very beginning. Within a few years, cooperation and solidarity with the progressive forces in the world has been initiated and strong bridges built with many friendly states. A solid base for the alliance with the socialist camp was established, culminating in the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation with the Soviet Union on April 9th, 1972.

Thus when the encounter with the monopolies came, the revolution did not have to look behind its back and could look straight ahead for the decisive blow.

On June 5th, 1967, the masses were looking on from a distance. They were asked to listen to the news and the speeches, applaud the motorcades, wait for zero hour and prepare laurels for the victors on their return from battle.

When the war broke out we used only the outer shell of our full potential, both military and civil. The energies of one hundred million Arabs were kept in store while the enemy deployed its full human potential. Every man and woman of the population had a definite duty in the fight. It was natural that we should be defeated.

But on June 1st, 1972, the primary orientation was towards the people. They were kept informed of the facts, the timing and told what was needed to make it succeed. For fourteen days, which will remain immortal in our history*, an unprecedented mobilisation took place in the country.

Every citizen became a negotiator with oil companies; every citizen turned into an economist reckoning the outcome, into a politician planning the victory and into a soldier carrying his gun. During those eventful days the people demonstrated a willingness to make sacrifices which greatly enhanced the self-confidence of the leadership. The genius of the people, which can work miracles, became a reality and the calculations of the monopolies were of no avail.

On June 5th, 1967, Liberation was not the objective, but when popular tension mounted and the situation became explosive, the war had certain temptation for the rulers. As for the enemy, they did not want war to break out which they could not preempt, as this would cost a great deal even if they won at the end. While we hesitated in making up our minds and listening to opinions from all sides, the enemy was able to play a surprise game which had an important impact on the result.

They let us pretend that we were strong and resolute, whereas that they were weak and disabled. They insinuated that they had given up any idea of

* The fourteen days are from May 17th, 1972, the day the government delivered an ultimatum to the oil companies demanding our legitimate rights, to June 1st, 1972, day when the nationalisation of the Iraq Petroleum Company was proclaimed.

fighting and invited photographers to take pictures of their troops swimming in the sea. The following morning they attacked, after we ourselves had allowed our troops to do something nearly like swimming at the coast.

But on June 1st, 1972, the case was different and the games of the monopolies boomeranged. They provoked us by seriously cutting back oil production and tried to trap us on this point which was one of those on which we were in dispute.

But our response was a surprise to them. The ultimatum issued by the Revolution Command Council contained not only the point on production but all the points of difference. Without waiting for their answer, we turned to the people to tell them what they shoud do and took precautions against the worst result.

Against this unexpected reaction, the monopolies tried to manoeuvre. A week after the ultimatum, they leaked the news that oil production in the northern fields would be stepped up to the maximum. That was an attempt to abort the battle in midstream, to counter the people mobilisation and cause dissension in our ranks. But the answer was firm: no compromise. Either reply to all demands or to breaks off negociations, for our demands are an indivisible whole.

The companies did not make their offer at the beginning or during the period allowed by the ultimatum. They came instead on the last day although the government had declared that June 1st would be the deadline.

By doing this the companies wanted to envolve us in protracted negociations for some days after the

deadline, thereby discrediting the government who had said that everything would be resolved by June 1st. If this were to happen, doubt would set in, the government weakened and the companies would be able to cope with the situation.

On the morning of May 31st the companies' delegation headed for the Ministry of Oil and Minerals and began to talk about an offer. The officials replied that they wanted a definite offer in writing which could be discussed at the evening meeting.

At the evening meeting, the companies delegation tried to go into great detail and prolong the talks, but the head of the government delegation said that the aim of the meeting was to settle the subject and that they wished to know the companies offer in order to discuss it, clarify certain points and take a final decision. The companies' delegation presented the offer and the head of the government delegation declared that the government rejected it. The companies' chief representative said: "We cannot make a better offer". The head of the government delegation replied: " Then the negotiations are ended". The companies' chief representative tried to reiterate but the head of the government delegation told him that this would not do. Either there should be an offer which met the demands of the government or there would be a breakdown of negotiations. He said: "We will be very tolerant and allow the companies to reconsider the matter and submit a new offer by 11 a.m. the following day, June 1st. At 11 a.m. we will take an immediate decision. We will either accept the offer, if it merits it, or we will reject it".

The chief representative of the companies' dele-

gation then tried the last manoeuvre of the Iraq Petroleum Company, when he asked: "Tomorrow at 11 a.m. can I ask for a new date?".

The head of the government delegation replied: "11 a.m. will be the deadline for submitting the companies' offer here in this hall. If you come later than this hour, we will refuse your offer whether it is acceptable or not. There will be no further date for negotiations".

In the morning of the following day the companies' made no new offer because in both instances they would be defeated i.e. in giving in to the government's demands or in rejecting them.

On June 1st, as promised by the government, President Ahmed Hassan al-Bakr, in a confident voice, proclaimed the nationalization decision.

These are some of the aspects of the relationship between the two experiences, aspects which may be useful in our battles in the future.

The Nationalisation of Oil
The Significance and the Example *

Why are we observing the first anniversary of the nationalisation of the operations of the Iraq Petroleum Company? Is it an event which surpasses its place in time to become an annual patriotic and national day? What is its significance and what lessons do we learn from it?

It is not an exaggeration to say that the nationalisation struggle was something which is rarely seen in the lifetime of an individual or a generation. It is the type of event which cuts open new channels, opens up new perspectives and brings new elements into the political scene. So in observing the anniversary it is not only the celebration of victory, which is a normal thing to do, but also to see what lessons it holds for the onward march of the revolutionary movement.

Oil has always been part of a myth. The companies

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which extract, refine and market "the black gold" were seen as a group of mighty giants manipulating the market as they wished, overthrowing governments which displeased them, honouring others and giving out gifts when they were pleased. They are supernatural beings who are unbeatable and one has to acquiesce to their will. Anyone who did not believe this would be told: "See what happened to Dr Mosaddaq!". I do not think that anyone would want to meet the same fate as Dr Mosaddaq.

In the period following Wold War II, the tide of the liberation movement rose in Asia and Africa bringing with it new social and political forces. These swept away existing myths like the French and British empire on which the "sun never sets". In the 1960s oil lost some of its awe with the birth of OPEC, the promulgation of Law No. 80 in Iraq, Algeria's partial nationalization, and other blows to the monopolies, but a good deal of its power remained behind.

The monopolies were fostering, with all their power, the illusion that the people of the oil producing countries were incapable of carrying out oil prospecting or of managing the sophisticated operations and equipment required to extract it. Even if they could, they would not be able to market it because the market was controlled by the monopolies. This illusion lasted for many years until the people started to become restless under the situation and their sons began to learn how to drill and pump the oil. They went on to study marketing and buying in the world oil market and acquired the data which was needed. All this was a forward progress, but

still the illusion did not disappear. It remained strong because the developments taking place were under the dominance of the major monopolies and were happening with their consent. They adapted themselves to the new circumstances and try to contain them. They were feeling the winds of change but by a policy of pressure or of concession were able to prevent any drastic changes in the situation. The oil producing states fought by exposing their exploitation and manoeuvres, extracting some rights from them and imposing a partial national sovereignty. Although the monopolies passed through difficult days and had to make significant concessions, they nevertheless felt that they were safe because they had not been struck in the heart.

In mythology, the story is told about the dragon who terrorised the inhabitants of a village and was offered a virgin every morning to avert its wrath. This would continue until a valiant knight who did not fear death, appeared to challenge the dragon and drive a sharp spear into its heart. The spell would then be broken and the inhabitants could live in peace and tranquility. The nationalization of oil in Iraq was decided on June 1st, 1972. It meant that one of the sons of the village—one of the oil producing peoples who had for decades been living under terrorization and blackmail and had been giving gifts to the monopoly dragon stood his ground bravely and resolutely and drove a sharp dart into the dragon's heart. In reality, contrary to the myth, the dragon does not die at once and with one blow, but with this blow the hour of its death has started.

So as we said at the beginning, this great event

cuts open new channels, opens up new perspectives in the life of oppressed peoples and brings new elements to the forefront. The decision to nationalize was a firm rejection of the tug-of-war game practised by the monopolies during the 1950s and 1960s. It was a direct challenge to a duel.

In order to maintain the illusion, the monopolies boastfully and insolentely accepted the challenge. They unsheathed their sword and by every means, political, economic, technical and psychological in its possession it attacked the revolution which had nationalized the oil. They even threatened military action. The battle was not an outing and was not resolved with one blow, as in the legend. It was hard and complicated and needed many blows to resolve it.

The secret of the success of the revolution in this is that it was able to assemble intelligently and efficiently the necessary elements for success and to use them properly and creatively. They invented some of these elements, though not all of them. Many were already in existence from previous experience and were waiting for a mature revolutionary leadership to assemble them, accomodate them to each other and convert them from quantity to quality through a difficult creative revolutionary process.

When this is done, victory is possible, and so it was. What defeated the monopolies was not the decision itself on nationalization, courageous though it was; rather it was the preliminary tactics before the decision was taken, i.e. during the four years leading up to the decision of June 1st and subsequently during the nine glorious months which ended in the surrender of the monopolies on March 1st, 1973.

The revolution realized the importance of national and party unity and worked towards this before and after nationalization. It realized the importance of public participation in any national battle and gave it its part to play. It realized the importance of the Pan-Arab aspect and made the confrontation a Pan-Arab rather than a regional one. It was also conscious of the importance of the alliance with world revolutionary forces, in the forefront of which was the socialist camp. It bolstered this alliance and, by an understanding of the element of contradiction and competition between Western interests having pinpointed its characteristics, was able to make use of the alliance in an intelligent and efficient manner without departing from its principles. It also realized the importance for success of good management and technique and gave this careful attention. Finally, the revolution was very aware of the importance to morale of determination and steadfastness in this type of battle, and so, even in its darkest and most worrying hours, it went steadily forward to victory.

Thus the illusion which had existed for decades, was shattered and the subject of nationalization was changed from being "an almost impossible far-distant thing" to that of being "a possible attainable thing", on condition that the prerequisites for success be provided. Thus a new historical stage in the struggle between the peoples and the monopolies has begun. Events did not come to a standstill at this point, for the battle which took place between June 1st, 1972 and March 1st, 1973 was not only on economic grounds but was also distinctly political. For us, nationalization was not just a question of profit and

loss, it was primarily a matter of independence. The companies and the imperialist states behind them were forced to reveal the fact that the issue of oil was no longer only a commercial use but also one of domination and destiny, i.e. a political issue. Thus the nationalization struggle in Iraq has torn another mask from the face of oil and revealed the political aspects in the most dangerous area in the world at a crucial stage in the history of the area.

This goes to confirm that nationalization has cut new channels, opened up new perspectives and brought new elements to the political scene.

In the predicament in which the Arab nation lives today—the predicaments of a quarter of a century of Zionist usurpation and of six year old June defeat,—the nationalization battle in Iraq sets a successful example and suggests new perspectives for the struggle between us and the Zionist usurper and its imperialist supporters.

In the same way that the monopolies projected the idea of a myth, so has "Israel", especially since June 5th, 1967, tried to project itself as the dragon myth of the area whom no one may challenge and to whom the inhabitants must give tribute.

"Israel" is strong and the monopolies are strong. Each, in its own way, stretches out like an octopus over the whole world. Both are clever and possess high technological resources. "Israel" does not stand alone; it is the product of world imperialism and its tool in the area. The monopolies are not just trading companies; they are the outpost of imperialism and the guardians of its most vital interests in the world.

"Israel" soundly defeated some Arab governments

who had underestimated its capabilities and thought that they would throw it into the sea.

The monopolies soundly defeated Mossadaq's government and all those others who imagined that they could easily defeat them. The two myths of the oil monopolies and of "Israel" are not only identical but they also overlap; each complements the other and they are two sides of the same coin, i.e. the imperialist domination of the area.

The decision of June 1st has transformed the subject of nationalization (the most ferocious battle against the monopolies—the dragon myth) from being "an almost impossible far-distant thing" to that of "a possible attainable thing", after having provided the necessary prerequisites for success. Is it not possible therefore to take this experiment as a model for transforming the confrontation with Israel? Is it not possible to use this model as a means of refuting the game of "Israel" and imperialism over the last six years—by this we mean the game of a peaceful solution to the problem, the outcome of which can only be further setbacks for the Arabs and a further break-up of solidarity? Could not this model be used to overturn the table of "Israel" and its rise, imperialism, to challenge them to a duel in which the arrows do not go up into the air, but are aimed at the heart,—at the heart of "Israel" and the imperialist interests?

But what are the prerequisites for success in a battle of this kind? The most important requisites are dedication and sincerity both with oneself and with the people. When we say this, we are not suggesting the "ideal and ethical" approach at the expense of the realistic diagnosis.

In our opinion this is a symptom of a dangerous disease which is spreading throughout Arab politics. If we look back to the June defeat, we find that one of the important reasons was the lack of dedication and sincerity by the governments with themselves and with the people. The leaders of the defeated regimes had spent many years preparing for the war with much martial music but little serious work and did not discuss the facts of the situation with the people. They did not even discuss them frankly with themselves. So when the fighting started, they were defeated in a few days and brought disaster upon themselves and their nation.

In order to destroy the "Israeli" myth, we have to assess, coldly and objectively our current political, military, economic and cultural potential, without either over or underestimation. We then have to cultivate these potentials year after year without being diverted from the primary objective. Then time will be on our side and not on the side of the enemy as it has been during the last six dark years when the Arab governments were lost in a vacuum, hopelessly chasing a mirage.

In any war, the combatants must search for the factors of supremacy. This subject is particularly important for us because it was and still is the biggest mistake which the Arab regimes made. Either through empiricism or regional bureaucracy, or even with treasonable motives, the Arab regimes attempted to gain supremacy over the enemy by the same methods with which he had gained supremacy over us.

They chased this mirage for twenty-five years without succeeding in finding it. At every confrontation

with the enemy, they fell into his trap and were defeated.

From the objective point of view, the enemy is superior to us in many ways which need not be repeated here. Much has already been said. But on our side, we are superior in many ways to the enemy. The "Israelis" used every factor of supremacy in the best possible way, whereas the Arabs tried to compete on the same terms and threw away every advantage which we had over them.

What are the factors with which we have an advantage? What is strange is that the answer is so easy that one can hardly believe it.

The first factor is that we are a nation of more than one hundred million people and the enemy's population does not exceed three millions. The enemy cannot match us on this point. If we put one half, or one third of these people into the fight they would outnumber the enemy by ten to one. Whatever the difference may be in armament or technology, and it is not very great, the factor of superior numbers is very important.

The second factor is that the Arab territory is so large that it can absorb shock attacks and respond to them, while the enemy is enclosed in a relatively small area of land and does not have, therefore, this capability. This is yet another factor with which the enemy cannot match, no matter what territory it may occupy and usurp.

What happened was that the enemy was always able to choose the positions on which the battle would take place and the Arab regimes were going along with this intention, whereas every fighter ought to

choose the ground which is most advantageous for himself, especially since the land is his own which he can use as he likes.

The third factor is that we have oil. It is yet another thing which "Israel" does not have. Hence we must correlate the myth of "Israel" and the myth of the monopolies which are two faces of the same coin, i.e. the imperialist influence in the area. In order to destroy the myth of "Israel" we have to give it the same degree of attention as we did to the monopoly myth. We can then turn the tables on them and imperialism, prevent them from practising their game of delusion and intimidation, so that our arrows, shot wastefully into the air hitherto, will begin to strike the heart of "Israel" and its sire.

All the important factors of supremacy are in our hands, and all we need is the will, the faith, the preparation and readiness for sacrifice in order to throw them into the battle. The factors of supremacy of the enemy are important, but most of them are imported and depend upon their sire, imperialism.

The first factor of supremacy is our people, our great people for whom we must secure the freedom of independence and free them from the mandates which have chained them for many years.

The second factor is Arab unity, which all talk about and most governments and politicians work against so that it loses its positive revolutionary content. Once we form a true fighting alliance, we will, having provided the first factor, have gained considerable supremacy over the enemy.

Having established the first two factors, the third will become the secret weapon which governments

and armies look for. If we use it intelligently and efficiently with determination we shall drastically tip the balance of forces in the area. We shall force the world to treat us in another way, not the way of contempt and indifference with which it treats us now. There are the fundamental prerequisites for shattering the "Israeli" myth. There are no secrets or imaginings hidden in the supernatural world. They exist in front of us, waiting for us to use them intelligently, diligently and efficiently.

The battle will not be an outing, even given the positive effect of these factors. It will be a hard and ferocious battle, with many gains and reverses, but victory will in the end be on our side.

The nationalisation struggle in Iraq is not only relevant to the Pan-Arab movement but is also one of its "specimens", a miniature which should be studied in order to be able to explore the facts and requirements of the long road of battle with the imperialist and zionist enemies, the road at the end of which the monument of the triumph of the Arab revolution stands on high.

Simple Words On Complicated Questions *

Revolution is one of the hardest and most complex historical processes which man can undertake either as an individual or as a group. The simple view that it is a straightforward, ever ascending road is wrong and even naive. This is because the process involves the transformation of the individual intellectually, behaviourably and ethically and the drastic transformation of society economically, politically, culturally, socially and militarily. This cannot be achieved with one or a limited number of blows no matter how strong be the will of the revolution or how faithful and tested its tool.

A revolution is not harmed if it meets obstacles which cause it to halt temporarily or even retreat temporarily, but this must be performed through dialectical processes whose future conclusion is an ascending progress.

The romantic concept of revolution is an old

* Written at the end of 1970, but has not been published before.

question which has frequently been the subject of argument and even conflict between the most loyal revolutionists. Many questions, including the romantic concept, crop up as though they were new ones, in spite of the richness of human revolutionary experience since the peoples socialist revolutions, the first of which was the Russian October revolution.

Apart from the various differences of opinion on certain matters, the experiences of genuine world revolutions, amongst which is the Arab experiment, point to some facts which should not be forgotten no matter how dark the days may be and however full the hours may be of emotional tension.

The questions of revolution are realistic ones, and no serious revolutionist can ignore this sometimes unpalatable fact. Even if the genuine revolution refuses to give in the reality and works with determination to change it, it cannot in the meantime ignore it, and all its material and tangible facts.

Probably the most serious mistake which a revolutionist might make is to believe that ardour and brave revolutionary words are enough for tackling the very complex questions of reality. Ardour and revolutionary words only form a part of the revolutionists equipment in bringing about a revolution.

It is not a new discovery when one says that just as revolutionary movements contain rightist and wavering elements who are afraid of facing the reality which the revolution has set out to change, so they also contain elements who imagine that the complex and merciless reality can be revolutionized by theatrically jumping over it.

The first task of a revolution is to wage an ideo-

logical, political and organisational struggle against wavering rightist trends, as well as against lack of objectivity. To be slack in this, encourages counter trendes whereby the revolution can be caught between the hammer and the anvil.

Lack of objectivity is the result in the first place of a revolutionary immaturity on both practical and theoretical levels. This phenomenon requires treatment of a special kind, a treatment which stems from the concept of strong loyalty towards the revolutionist leaders. Even though it may cause ill will, concentration must be on their mistakes and they must be helped to correct them.

World revolutionary experience and our own Arab experience also point to the fact that this phenomenon does not always occur amongst faithful revolutionists. It can also be made by opportunist elements—not only in the familiar meaning of opportunism in political science but also in its ordinary ethical meaning. In this case both the assessment and the way of tackling it differs drastically.

Many opportunists and cowards find, in time of crisis, a unique opportunity to settle their private affairs, current or past. When the revolution is in a situation loaded with complex problems and is not able to cope with everything at the same time, including putting things in their right place, then the opportunist finds that the long awaited moment has come and he moves like lightning to exploit it by every means in his power. He slips in amongst the true strugglers to cover his intentions and rides on the wave of the revolution, even climbing up on its shoulders.

On every question, the revolutionist must make a careful comparison between theory and application, words and deeds, and allegation and conduct. Any idea, however magnificent, either by an individual or a group, which has not been the subject of long and continuous study and work, is an idea which does not yield fruit in the land of the revolution.

Like all people, revolutionists are not judged by their words only, but by past and present words and deeds. The revolutionary movement alone, be it word or deed, is not enough to sustain the revolutionary human being throughout his life. The struggler with an honourable record who may appear today to be in the wrong, is one thousand times more beneficial to the revolution, than the person without such a record, who appears before the people to be in the right. The struggler with a true revolutionary record, has within him the urge and instinct which moves him to be in the right. But to judge a person without such a record is something like guesswork. When falsehood appears, the revolutionist must obliterate it very firmly and must not be deceived by its appearance. To stand steadfast in the face of falsehood will reveal its fallacious covering and it can be rejected. So even if they may disagree amongst themselves, it is only the real revolutionists who will be able to last out in the arena.

Revolutionary action tastes sweet and bitter. He who tastes the sweet side must be brave enough to taste the bitter also. Thereby he may realize in himself the equation which produces the serious revolutionist who is faithful to his revolutionary movement. But he who chooses only the joyful moments of his revolution and turns away from its sad and difficult

hours, will have to change himself or the revolution will be forced to revise its attitude towards him. The relationship between the revolutionist and his revolution must be organic and cohesive, for otherwise it cannot exist at all. The real revolutionist knows that he might have to face a decision which is painful or one which makes him happy. As for the person who takes from the revolution the weal and turns away from it in times of woe, his relationship is inadequate; he is no more than a "pseudo-revolutionist" who only takes what is profitable from the revolution.

The revolution is not a single link, a single opportunity or a single battle. When one of these is missed, history and the revolution will not stand still. Whatever the reason for missing a link or an opportunity, true revolutionists are capable of replacing it with a better one.

Revolutionists who make mistakes, and this is in the nature of things, are the people most capable of tilting the balance to the side of right rather than the side of wrong. Because they are imbued with the revolution and have faith in its inevitable victory, they exert themselves to the maximum to push it forward.

However varied the points of view of revolutionists are, they have to hold to revolutionist ethics and try to consolidate them. Friction does not necessarily lead to fragmentation within the revolution. On the contrary, this is a way of enriching the experience of the revolution and of stabilising its base.

These are simple words on complicated questions which I hope will find their way to both the mind and the heart.

A Brief Return To Axioms *

"Why should the Arab Liberation Front exist?"

In my belief this is not an old question although two years have passed since the foundation of the Front and there has been much discussion about it. Raising it again today is a modest attempt to recall to mind the axioms of the revolutionary action in the Arab homeland.

At first glance, the recall of axioms may seem to be naive and unnecessary at a time when many imagine that they have reached a high level of revolutionary intellect and talk in big theories and extremely complex intellectual formulae.

But if we want to diagnose some of the ills of the Arab revolutionary movement, the illness of the abandonment of axioms or bypassing them for one reason or another, constitutes one of the most dangerous ills which drag the Arab movement into error.

Since the beginning of the Zionist emigration to

* Written in 1971, but has not been published before.

the land of Palestine, it is clear that what takes place there is an "Arab question". The Zionist invaders, brought by Zionist organisations with the help of the colonialist states, did not come only to build a Jewish State on a part of or on the whole of Palestine. They came with a long term colonialist-Zionist plan to build an aggressive and discriminatory doctrinal base for expansion whose target is to prevent the Arab Nation from achieving liberty, unity and the construction of a strong progressive society.

This simple fact clarifies the "Arab nature" of the matter. This nature is not changed by the fact that initially the Zionist movement aimed at the land and people of Palestine. The aggressive and expansionist nature of Zionism and imperialism became clear after June 1967 when they insisted on holding on to territory outside the geographical boundaries of Palestine.

Since this is the reality, the only effective way to fight the Zionist enemy and its imperialist supporters is by an Arab confrontation. The Arab Palestinian people who were driven out of their land, and whose numbers do not exceed those of the occupiers, are not able alone to defeat the colossal imperialist-Zionist alliance and destroy the Zionist entity which became, twenty years after its foundation an arsenal.

What is needed, therefore, is an all-out "Arab" confrontation in compliance with the "Arab nature" of the question. This question can only be resolved by throwing the full strength of the Arab nation into it.

Under these circumstances, differentiating between the "Palestinian struggle" and the "Arab struggle" against the imperialist-Zionist alliance is not possible even if one used thousands of words about unity of

destiny and unity of battle. In order that it may be a true fight for liberation it must have an Arab will, arena and strategy.

The "Palestinian" approach to the question found a relatively rapid acceptance in many parts of the world. It has positive advantages, but must not persuade us to have too much faith in this approach or to base our strategy on it. We can use it tactically as a means of drawing the attention of the world to understand the problem, one which has been distorted and misunderstood even in progressive circles. Our strategy must be an Arab one because it is only this which can lead to victory.

From these simple facts the Arab Liberation Front emerged which was logical as it conformed with the Arab revolutionary struggle towards the three great goals of Unity, Liberty and Socialism.

The bitter experience of the Palestinian resistance have in recent years proved the correctness of the starting point for the Arab Liberation Front. The commando operation, with which many Arab groups and governments used as a bargaining point, began to be destroyed with the sword of separationism—the weapon which many thought would be the strongest in the Palestinian's arsenal.

The fact that the Jordanian government used the weapon of separatism against the Resistance was not by chance or because of Jordanian local conditions; rather it was the inevitable result of the plans, in which many Arab leaders participated, which limited the operation to that of a regional one, —the least effective way to using it. But this is not all. The attempts of some Arab States to "protect" the com-

mando operation from the Jordanian government's attack are a confirmation of the separatist logic which continues to be disastrous for the Palestinians. All these activities ar centred around the plan which is to devise a coexistence between the Jordanian Government and the Palestine resistance which wanted to have a "government" of some sort because, in practice, it cannot co-exist with a reactionary government associated with imperialism unless it too becomes a "government" in some form. When this happens the established government is able to attack the new and weaker one,—the resistance.

Thus, massacres succeed each other, and agreements and visits from this or that direction follow in succession. All these lead to the pre-planned result, i.e. the neutralizing of the Resistance as a revolutionary activity and the taming of it by striking at it with the sword of separatism.

Thus it would seem that the opening question: "Why should the Liberation Front exist?" is no longer an old one. It is a burning question because the struggle with the imperialist-Zionist enemy still needs a return to first principles which many have arrogantly ignored and subsequently ended up in defeat or despair.

Towards a Steadfast Patriotic and Progressive Front *

On July 17th, and particularly on July 30th, 1968, Iraq entered a new era filled with great possibilities, after a dark and difficult period of ten years since July 14th, 1958.

During these ten years all the patriotic movements which made up the National Union Front before the July 14th, 1958 Revolution, took over or participated in power, as did some other movements which made their appearance in the post-July 1958 situation.

In the period preceding the July 14th 1958 Revolution the patriotic action was characterised by a common struggle under the banner of the National Union Front, against the colonialist-associated, reactionary monarchy.

After this revolution, the ten years were characterised by ferocious and violent conflicts between the movements, each trying to act independently, and by their internal strife.

* Published in Ath-Thawra, Décember 1968.

What have they and the people of Iraq reaped from this?

Each group came to power with many slogans and unlimited aspirations, but none survived for long and fell from power to the glee of the other movements, leaving behind uncertainty and a considerable harvest of mistakes.

Finally, before July 17th 1968, power ended up in the hands of a clique which had no links with any of the patriotic movements. It was a false clique which had no real identity and had a profound distrust of the patriotic movements and of the people. Its main objective was to keep in power on a day to day basis and to plunder what they could of the country's wealth, as in feudal times when the country was farmed out to relatives, friends and supporters.

The continued survival of this clique came to be regarded by all the patriotic movements and the people as an insult to the country.

All had agreed, before the July 14th 1958 Revolution, on the following goals: complete liberation from colonial influence, planning an independent, progressive national economy, liquidating feudalism and monopoly capitalism from the government to prevent the exploitation of the working class, forging a formula for democracy which suited national conditions, anchoring Kurds and Arabs together in a democratic unity, building up a strong army in preparation for the liberation of Palestine and other usurped territories in the Arab homeland, effectively participating in the Arab struggle against colonialism, zionism and reaction, and hammering out a practical formula for unity with the liberated Arab countries, especially the United

Arab Republic. All these goals on the eve of July 17th 1968, had either failed or had not been implemented.

Colonialism, which had been driven out by the July 14th, 1958 Revolution, returned covertly by the back door through espionage and suspect interests to the extent that every citizen began to feel their presence and impact. This in spite of the appearances of independence and claims of countering imperialism!

Petroleum which brings gold to our country as well as the conspiracies and snares of the colonialism, remained as always a benefit and simultaneously a curse.

During the ten years during which it should have become entirely a benefit and a powerful weapon, it remained as it had been on the eve of July 14th, 1958, under the domination of foreign monopolies. It remained the primary source without which we cannot live and we fear its sword upon our necks.

The new oil policy was still delayed and as a result the country paid a high price; on the eve of July 17th 1968 it was like an infant surrounded by disease and enemies.

The untapped resources of the national economy, water, soil and minerals had no long term plans for their exploitation. The main thing was to cope with the urgent needs of each day.

Feudalism did not come to an end as many thought it would after July 14th, 1958. It still existed in old and new forms on the economic, political and psyichological levels, and beside it stood tribalism, that outmoded form of social relationships, raising its head everywhere and even by the side of the revolution.

In industry and trade, the capitalist-monopolist

class continued to exploit the workers and the public in spite of lip service being paid to socialism. Its overt and covert influence in government was a reality which cannot be denied. The country was not making the best use of its wealth or of its experience in production and marketing. Relations with the colonialist economies took on new forms which more or less fulfilled the same purposes as the old ones.

As for democracy, considered to be the inevitable result of the July 14th, 1958 Revolution after years of persecution and oppression, we ourselves know that the prisons in Iraq continued to receive members of one patriotics movement after another and that torture and oppression continued. In fact it became worse for, except for very short periods, the patriotic movements were deprived of freedom of action and expression. During that period, the country lived without overt political organisations and parties, without active unions and without a free press, and it was the faith in progress and democracy which brought about this repression and unemployment.

The army, instead of being the guardian of our independence and a sword for the liberation of Palestine, was exhausted in every way by the fighting in Northern Iraq. The dictatorial rulers feared that it would revolt against them so harassed its patriotic officers and soldiers and put the leadership into the hands of incompetents and mercenaries. When the hour of the battle with "Israel" came, the army was not allowed to take part, although this had been the ambition of its members since the battles of 1948.

After the revolution of July 14th, 1958, Iraq was expected to upset the balance of forces in the

whole Middle East area in a conclusive manner in order to help the struggle against colonialism, Zionism and reaction. But after the first few steps in this direction it became engaged in tackling its internal problems to the point that its hands were no longer free for the battle.

Its ostensible contribution to the struggle was sufficient to prevent reproach and was made under pressure rather than voluntarily. There were even some periods when Iraq was a hindrance to these causes.

Unity between Arabs and Kurds remained suspended between useless fighting and false truces. As time passed the situation became more complicated and bitter and huge amounts of money, effort, weapons and men were thrown into it in vain. These men should have suffered their martyrdom elsewhere than in Iraq,—there in Palestine where martyrdom has a positive meaning.

The problem remained as one of those mythical animals whose teeth are continually searching for new victims, and effectively preventing the army and the government from preparing for the inevitable war between the Arabs and "Israel".

Arab unity—this great hope for the independence and progress of our nation, which the July 14th 1958 revolution wag going to push forward—collapsed shortly afterwards. The break-up of the Egypto-Syrian Unification occurred and since that black day nothing remained on the eve of July 17th 1968, except a document called the Unified Political Leadership Charter and a defunct ministry called the Ministry of Unity Affairs.

That was the picture of conditions in Iraq before

July 17th, 1968. It is a black picture but a realistic one.

Nevertheless, this darkness does not mean that the previous period was completely devoid of positive elements. But if these positive elements were weighed in the balance together with the ambitious goals, the challenges with which the people of Iraq were faced and the Arab nation was faced, against the negative elements of that period, they would seem to be very few. Therefore, in the blackness of the picture there are some shining points here and there.

In assessing the successes of the previous period, one is not looking at their quantity as the yardstick. Few as they were, if they had been solidly based, there would have been no problem. But the problem was that the positive factors did not stand on solid ground and were always under threat. Let us take the republican regime as a positive example, which was stabbed to its heart in 1966. In that year something took place which usually only happens in kingdoms, emirates and sheikhdoms, when the brother of the dead president was made president of the republic *. A form of conduct which was in blatant contradiction with the conventions of a republican regime.

In ways such as this, the positive elements were threatened. The failures of the patriotic movements which succeeded each other in power of the ten years, spread pessimism and doubt and anything which was

* Abdul Rahman Asif was made President of the Republic of Iraq immediately after his brother Abdul Salam Arif, the then President died in a helicopter accident.

successfully achieved was looked at with an air of scepticism. The familiar sequence of events of—taking over power, with an ambitious policy and programme, the accomplishment of some aims, then a series of mistakes followed by internal conflicts, ending in the usual way, i.e. the collapse.

In addition, if we consider what fumbling was going on in the rest of the liberated Arab countries and add to it the disaster of June 5th, 1967, one can understand how black the picture looked in Iraq before July 17th, 1968.

But in the dark despair of this situation and as a result of the dialectical relationship between defeat and victory, some positive portents began to appear and find their way slowly into the minds and souls of the patriotic movements which were split asunder by their quarrels and altercations.

This was slowly gestating in the womb of the last experiment, but the June 1967 defeat was the sharp stimulus which brought it to the stage of parturition.

From their several ideological points of view and their several ways of drawing their conclusions, the various patriotic movements began to recognize fairly clearly that something had gone wrong with their policy.

However, instead of recognizing that the main contradiction was that of the relationship between all the patriotic progressive movements and colonialism, Zionism and reaction, they persisted in giving priority to the various movements, and in doing so they raised the temperature of the conflict. It could be said that the conflict, in terms of its quality of acerbity, considerably greater than that between all these move-

ments and colonialism imperialism and reaction. The June defeat proved how mistaken this attitude was and that, at the least, it was necessary to redirect it if the Arab nation and its freedom to progress were to be preserved.

This attitude was not just an Iraqi one. It took place throughout the Arab nation.

After the June defeat we began to feel that there were attempts being made to re-assess the fundamental issues and arrive at a synthesis of some of the patriotic movements whose barriers had been somewhat lowered compared with the past, and there appeared to some trend towards understanding the point of view of others.

This new feeling, fed by the failures and defeats of the past, seemed to form a new real bridge between the patriotic movements which could be the framework for a Pan-Arab Union.

But it did not possess the magic wand which could bring about this wish. There were many obstacles in the way which even the good intentions of the July 17th, 1968 revolution could not immediately resolve.

What then were the obstacles which stood in the way of forming a united patriotic front in Iraq?

In addition to the Kurdish question, which had become very complex, and the disagreements between the patriotic movements, there were three main obstacles:

1. The five progressive parties which existed before the July 14th 1958 were united *. During the

* The parties were: The Arab Ba'th Socialist Parts, the Iraqi Communist Party, the Independence Party, The Patriotic Democratic Party and the Kurdistan Democratic Party.

subsequent ten year period they split up and subdivided into separate branches and in addition new blocs formed which had no connection with the original five parties.

Even in the more fruitful atmosphere after the June defeat, there were many reservations about who could or might ally with whom, with preference being given to offshoots of the party concerned.

The main problem facing such a union, was the fact that the main political parties had not yet come together and the others were waiting for this to happen. Also that if and when it did happen, it might only occasion a further series of splinter groups.

All attempts at resolving the dilemma were blocked at this point.

2. The united front which was in formation before July 17th, 1968, was different from that formed before July 14th 1958. Before July 1958 none of the patriotic movements had been in power and their political activity had consisted of struggles against the monarchy. The possibility of governing the country did not enter into their calculations.

But by July 17th 1968, all the patriotic movements had experienced the ascent and departure from power and all were preoccupied with the problems of government as well as their party problems.

Because of this preoccupation, any attempts to form a coalition failed.

3. A barrier existed as to the extent to which the parties making up the front should participate in the government.

In a crisis situation such problems tend to diminish, but when it becomes a question of the surrender

of power it is much more important, especially in a takeover situation from an existing regime. This was the situation at the time of Abdul Rahman Arif *.

This is a question which is rarely discussed openly, but in fact is the most important one underlying the negotiations and manoeuverings between movements —all are concerned with the position which they will occupy in the future government.

A regrettable phenomenon in Iraqi politics, though not confined to Iraq alone, is that no objective assessment has been made of the real strength and importance of the main political parties. Over the long period during which the parties were in conflict, each portrayed the other as an enemy of the cause and that therefore they should be removed.

The state of fragmentation within each party further confused the issue, added to which was the phenomenon of theoretical disability in each. A correct process of assessment of the strength and role of each movement requires profound objective and scientific work based on a theoretical ability. Instead, from party bigotry, attempts were continually made to praise oneself and disparage the others.

This investigation will become a perious and urgent matter when a formula is being worked out for a patriotic party coalition, and it is only since the June defeat that such thought has been given to it.

The complex situation in Iraq and elsewhere means that this study will take much time and effort to resolve it.

Up until the July 17th 1968 Revolution there had

* See previous footnote.

been no real unification between the patriotic movements. After July 30th the Arab ba'th socialist Party took over power and called for the cooperation of other progressive forces.

Those who had been dreaming of forming a national front to take over the government could see for themselves the actions of the Ba'th on July 17th and 30th and its call for cooperation. For their part, they had to define their attitudes in a practical way and to fit the new circumstances.

Anyone looking at conditions in Iraq before July 17th could see that the question of forming a real national union would take a long time. The relative freedom in which these discussions took place made it easy for espionage networks and reactionary elements to take advantage of these protracted negotiations and prepare for an overthrow of the government and an installation of a reactionary colonialist regime.

As well as this threat, there were two other possible dangers:

1. The possibility that the Arif-Yahyia * government might consider that it had reached an impasse and decide to change its liberal policy of allowing free discussion between the patriotic movements to one of oppression and terrorization as a solution to its dilemma and to maintain itself in power.

2. The possibility that a clique within the Arif government might take over in order to establish a military dictatorship, with the support of reactionary forces.

* Tahir Yahyia was Prime Minister of Iraq during the Presidency of Abdul Salam Arif, and Prime Minister when the July 17th, 1968 Revolution broke out.

Under these possible threats, the deterioration of the economic situation and in the relations between Arabs and Kurds, there was another element,—the possible outbreak of war between the Arab nation and Israel. Iraq in its current situation could not participate seriously in this, just as in June 1967.

This is one of the fundamental justifications for the Ba'th party to have taken power alone—the long time required to form a national front and the dangerous situation in the country. Whatever the feelings were about the Ba'th party alone taking over power, one must look at the matter in a realistic and objective manner.

We do not think that it would be in the national interest to review the negative aspects of this single-handed take over of power, but rather to emphasize the positive aspects as follows:

1. The July 1968 changeover brought to an end a reactionary regime and a military dictatorship which was hostile to all the patriotic movements, and which at the same time was attempting to cancel out the progressive programmes of these parties.

2. The Ba'th takeover of power meant that one of the most important progressive movements was in a position to apply, in thinking and action, the methods of the patritoic movements,—something which hitherto had been forbidden. Its call for cooperation also signified an abandonment of a policy for monopolizing the government and the beginning of a bridge-building approach which would establish the progressive government on solid foundations.

This emphasis on the positive side should not be regarded as a syncophantic support for the govern-

ment. In fact, it will hopefully, clarify the minds of all the progressive and patriotic movements.

The tendency to assess the Ba'th Party by pointing to its faults is not something which can help to serve the national interest or the unification of the patriotic parties and a comparison with previous regimes would be wrong because the comparison cannot be made on equivalent terms.

The pertinent question, however, is how, after the July 1968 event, the patriotic movements should be brought together to form a consolidated front, and what the platform should be in order to position the country so that it can make a positive contribution to the Arab revolution and its goals of Unity, Liberty and Socialism.

It may be thought that to talk today about the front is a waste of time because the discussions of a few months ago did not produce encouraging results and the parties seemed to have gone back to their entreched positions.

In fact, discussion about the front is very relevant and all parties agree that it is a cornerstone of our strategy today. And this demands from us a certain way of thinking which should be divorced from temporary and unimportant historical repercussions.

No opportunity should be missed which may help to bring about the coalition of the patriotic movements whether it is by word or by deed.

One of the basic questions is as follows: should a political coalition be formed and then followed by close cooperation? Or should it be the other way round—close cooperation followed by a formal coalition?

In my opinion, the possibility of forming a solid patriotic front in Iraq and getting agreement on a short term political charter is in the realm of miracles. Even if it were possible to do it, it would be vulnerable to many kinds of danger.

Sincere wishes are not a substitute for a serious approach and, moreover, there are two conditions which must be applied, namely, the correct theoretical analysis and definition of the structure of the front and its tasks and methods; and secondly, the practice of thinking and action in conformity with the front's policy to the point that it becomes an automatic reflex.

These conditions have not been met over the last ten years, and political parties have only been thinking in terms of their own activities.

Some attempts were made after the June defeat but they fell far short of being complete.

Therefore, the most practical way towards forming a front is a patriotic cooperation at all levels which will be gradually improved and strenghtened to the point that it will be possible to form a coalition and draw up a charter.

This cooperation, which is already starting, will create an atmosphere conducive to thinking in terms of a coalition and provide a firm base for the future.

In the meanwhile, the patriotic movements outside the government have to act in such a way as to reach this goal, whereas the government must continually reiterate that this call for unity is not an emotional, romantic one but is a realistic assessment of the national requirements and those of con-

fronting the imperialist-zionist aggressor, tasks which are too big to be tackled by one party alone.

The Ninth Pan-Arab Congress of the Arab Ba'th Socialist Party, convened in February 1968 clearly stated that a united front of parties in government or outside it was the only formula suitable for the existing circumstances of imperialist-zionist aggression.

The movements outside the government should stop considering that the party in power is "the other party" and therefore to be undermined.

This of course, does not deny the right to criticize and to make proposals, but the movements should remember that in criticizing the government, they will be playing into the hands of the enemy and renegades.

They should therefore support the government as the bridge towards the day of a national coalition regime.

The practice of leaving the government on its own to face the colonialist and reactionary conspiracies and the complex of economic problems is wrong in that it endangers the historic opportunity for a firm progressive government.

The continuation of the policy of demanding that the government should implement certain projects as a preliminary to coalition is also wrong and is a defective method.

They are certainly entitled to ask the government to implement them, and the government should try to do so. But all the movements who have been in power at one time or another know what the problems are of implementing anything in Iraq. The leaders of July did not have a magic wand which could transform everything in a short time. In spite of their good

will, the backward conditions of the country, the lack of logical planning and the corruption in the civil service made it impossible to achieve very much in a short space of time.

No single party possesses all the capabilities of achieving the essential objectives of moving the country along the path of progressive revolution. The call for a coalition indicates, amongst other things, that the ruling party cannot do everything alone. But if the other parties demand that all this should be done as a condition for forming the coalition, what else is this but a process of crippling the effort? Even if all the parties were united in trying to carry out the aims of the revolution, they would have a hard task. How then can one party be expected to realize everything?

The correct procedure should be for the progressive movements to cooperate in achieving the national goals before the final agreement on the front and the charter. This is possible in many instances.

Merely carrying on a lengthy dialogue with the government and entering into protracted bargaining is a sterile approach and tends to lower hopes of the usefulness of a coalition, it also gives the reactionaries the opportunity to sow dissension and conflict between these movements and the government and make them both more vulnerable to attack.

Being too hasty in forming a coalition would be an unstable basis, just as to leave the stage empty for too long a period is also dangerous.

To behave like Byzantine logicians to dot every i and cross every t gives "Israel", imperialism and the reactionary forces, who will not wait until the lengthy

dialogue is over, a chance to make use of the vacuum in the area. They are not asleep or paralyzed and one of their aims is to thwart attempts at forming a patriotic front.

The cooperation between the movements and the government must not be on an ad hoc basis or left to chance. Rather it should be planned for specific schedules with definite objectives, which if sincerely carried out will help to construct the solid base needed for the progress of the revolution. These schedules are:

1. To defend the existing regime against colonial-inspired plots with every means. The downfall of the government would not only be a catastrophe for the Ba'th alone, but also a national catastrophe, and the loss of a historic opportunity for creating a progressive regime.

The victory of these opponents would mean the merciless repression of all the patriotic progressive movements.

2. To work in every way to resolve the Kurdish question, the solution to which is a prerequisite for setting up a real patriotic coalition. If any movement finds, for one reason or another, that it is unable to take part in this, it should at least not try to delay matters or encourage an armed rebellion. All progressive movements both in and outside the country are called upon to exert all their efforts to find a peaceful solution. For, fighting to break out would be the best way of encouraging reactionary elements and would block attempts at forming a true national coalition.

To stand on the sidelines and criticize would be

a mistake because the question is not only one between the government and the Kurds, but also concerns the Arab nation at a time when Iraq is called upon to throw her forces into the fight against "Israel". It is also a question which concerns all the forces of progress and liberation in the world as a nationalistic question, but as well for the effect it can have on the humanitarian struggle against imperialism and aggression.

3. To participate with men and ideas in the independent petroleum policy of the government. It is meaningless to talk about a progressive revolution while petroleum is in the hands of the monopolies and while Iraq is unable to exploit directly her mineral resources. The large revenue which they yield, would enable her to become independent and free from the outside threats.

The direct exploitation of mineral resources, with their accompanying revenue, is a matter of life and death for the revolution.

Therefore the patriotic movements must participate with everything they have in this policy if they want conditions to develop in a steady way.

4. To participate in the process of mobilizing the military, political and economic energies of Iraq to fight the eventual war with "Israel" and its allies. The perpetuation of the "Israeli" occupation of Arab land and the recovery of imperialism in the area are a threat to the future of every progressive movement. Their destiny depends upon the forthcoming battle.

To be involved in the accomplishment of these goals will provide all the movements with a solid base for developing conditions in Iraq towards the

progressive revolution, without which all will remain in the air and exposed to danger.

To be involved in the act of cooperation in implementing these four goals will help to direct attention to achieving the objective of a national coalition and fending off the dangers of defeat.

The final fending off of danger will occur when the revolution is conclusively victorious, and this victory will arrive more quickly and in a better way under a patriotic front. But even if this takes a long time to realize, it would be wrong to freeze the possibilities of common action or leave it on an ad hoc basis.

Under all circumstances and however long it may take to form a patriotic progressive front, all movements are called upon to remember the great truth, which the masses also know: it is what the basic conflict is between the patriotic progressive forces on the one side and colonialism, Zionism and reaction on the other. That the conflicts between progressive forces are only of secondary importance and can be resolved without exaggerating them to the point of fighting.

The new conditions provided by the changes of July 17th and July 30th are a historic opportunity for putting Iraq on the road of national unity and progress. The patriotic movements have the responsibility of converting this opportunity into a reality.

It would be a severe trial before the bar of the people and of history if this opportunity were to be missed or abused for accomplishing the progressive revolution with its aims of unity and socialism.

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